



U.S. Immigration  
and Customs  
Enforcement

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# News Release

## **ICE ARRESTS 582 VIOLENT GANG MEMBERS AND ASSOCIATES IN TWO-WEEK NATIONWIDE ENFORCEMENT OPERATION**

*More than 1,057 arrests under ICE's ongoing "Community Shield" anti-gang initiative*

**NEW YORK** – Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff, and Marcy Forman, Director of Investigations for U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), today announced the arrest of 582 street gang members and associates during a two-week, nationwide enforcement action under the auspices of "Operation Community Shield," ICE's ongoing national anti-gang initiative.

From July 16 to July 28, ICE offices throughout the United States teamed up with federal, state and local law enforcement partners to target members of more than 54 violent street gangs, including Mara Salvatrucha (MS-13), Sureños, 18<sup>th</sup> Street Gang, Latin Kings, Vatos Locos, Mexican Mafia, La Raza gang, Border Brothers, Brown Pride, Norteno, Florencia 13, Tiny Rascal, Asian Boyz, Jamaican Posse, and numerous other violent street gangs.

The 582 individuals arrested in this two-week operation are accused of various criminal violations and/or administrative immigration violations. In total, 76 of these individuals have been charged with criminal violations that range from illegally re-entering the United States after deportation; to being alien in possession of a firearm; to possession of fraudulent documents or various state crimes.

The vast majority of the gang members and associates, 506, were arrested on administrative immigration charges, ranging from being a convicted felon foreign national subject to removal; to entering the country without inspection; to violating the terms of a visa. 261 of these individuals are foreign nationals who have prior criminal convictions, rendering them subject to removal from the United States.

Locally in New York, ICE arrested 26 violent gang members over the past two weeks. The 26 represented gangs such as the MS-13, Salvadorans with Pride and the Sombra Negra (Black Shadow).

Some of the gang members arrested in this operation include:

- Hedin Thomas Bonilla-Maldonado, a Honduran MS-13 gang member arrested by the Nassau County Police Department for murder in the 2<sup>nd</sup> degree, robbery in the 1<sup>st</sup> degree and gang assault in the 1<sup>st</sup> degree. Bonilla-Maldonado is in this country illegally and will be processed for removal upon the resolution of his local charges.
- Santos Alexander Gonzalez, a Salvadoran MS-13 member arrested by the Nassau County Police Department for gang assault in the 2<sup>nd</sup> degree. He too is in the country illegally and will be processed for removal upon the resolution of his local charges.

“These are violent gangs and their members have threatened the welfare of our communities,” said Salvatore Dalessandro, acting special agent-in-charge of the New York office. “Our agents, along with state and local law enforcement, will continue to work tirelessly to ensure that these criminals no longer terrorize our community.”

This national initiative harnessed the work of 40 ICE offices and more than 84 federal, state and local law enforcement agencies. This operation employed 384 ICE agents and officers, 247 state and local officers and 92 agents from the DEA, ATF and FBI.

The arrests during the past two weeks are the latest enforcement action under Operation Community Shield, a nationwide ICE anti-gang initiative intended to disrupt, dismantle, and assist in the criminal prosecution of violent gangs by employing the full range of authorities available to ICE.

ICE uses its broad immigration authorities (both criminal and administrative) against gang members, as well as its customs authorities in targeting gang-related narcotics smuggling, money laundering, and in seeking the forfeiture of illegally derived assets.

Operation Community Shield involves strong partnerships and cooperation with existing federal, state, and local anti-gang efforts. Such partnerships are essential to the success of the initiative and to ensure officer safety during operations. ICE uses intelligence on gang organizations and leadership provided by state and local authorities. This information is then used whenever possible to arrest, prosecute, and/or deport individual gang members.

Operation Community Shield also has an important foreign component, coordinating efforts through ICE’s Attaché offices abroad, particularly with those governments that are also experiencing gang problems. To date, ICE has participated in several anti-gang law enforcement summits and conferences throughout Central America to better coordinate anti-gang related efforts.

The initial target of Operation Community Shield was MS-13, which is one of the largest and most violent street gangs in the country. In February, ICE kicked off the initiative with agents in six major U.S. cities conducting a coordinated enforcement operation that resulted in the arrest of 103 members of MS-13. In the months that followed, ICE agents throughout the country joined ranks and continued targeting MS-13 members in their jurisdictions.

In May 2005, ICE expanded Operation Community Shield to include all criminal street gangs and prison gangs with foreign-born members. With the launch of this second phase, ICE’s Operation Community Shield aims to ensure that gang members have no safe haven in our nation’s communities.

**#ICE#**

*U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) was established in March 2003 as the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security. ICE is comprised of five integrated divisions that form a 21st century law enforcement agency with broad responsibilities for a number of key homeland security priorities*